

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GENEVA 00202 131819Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7530

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T GENEVA 0202

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: SREF TH

SUBJECT: RELOCATION OF MUONG REFUGEES FROM NAM PHONG

REF: STATE 007572, GENEVA 0099

1. I CALLED ON HCR SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN THIS AFTERNOON TO PRESENT POINTS MADE IN STATE 7572. PRESENT ALSO AT MEETING WERE DIRECTOR OF ASSISTANCE DIVISION JAEGER, OTTO GOBIUS, AND STAFF AID RIZVI.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY PRESENTATION, SADDRUDDIN FIRST OUTLINED STANDING UNHCR POLICY AGAINST MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES TOWARD BORDERS AS REPORTED GENEVA 0099. HAVING MADE THIS POINT, HOWEVER, HE CONTINUED TO SAY THAT UNHCR WOULD COOPERATE WITH THE THAI MOI IN CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF MUONG REFUGEES AT LOEI AND PETCHABUN AS OF APRIL 1. MUONG WERE IN ANY CASE INCLUDED AMONG ORIGINAL 40,000 REFUGEES IN THAILAND FOR WHOM UNHCR HAD UNDERTAKEN RESPONSIBILITY, HE OBSERVED.

3. HE AND STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT US GOVERNMENT DIRECT SUPPORT OF MUONG REFUGEES WOULD END AS OF MARCH 31, 1976, THOUGH ONE SAID THIS WAS FIRST NOTICE THEY HAD RECEIVED. GROUP URGED THAT US SUPPORT BETWEEN NOW AND CLOSEOUT DATE BE DIRECTED INsofar AS POSSIBLE TOWARD CONSTRUCTION OF

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 GENEVA 00202 131819Z

FACILITIES AT RELOCATION SITES, AND THAT, IF POSSIBLE,

ANY US FUNDS REMAINING AS OF END OF PERIOD BE
ATTRIBUTED TO THIS PURPOSE.

4. SADRUDDIN, AS HE HAD DONE EARLIER, CONTENDED
MAJOR PROBLEMS IN THIS, AS IN OTHER PARTS OF THAI
REFUGEE PROGRAM WAS THE BUREAUCRACY AND SXTHEMELY
SLOW MOVEMENT OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT IN THIS SECTOR.
IT WAS SUGGESTED BY GOBIUS THAT THIS COULD BE
DILIBERATELY FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, THAT
FUNDS NOT BE DISBURSED SO AS TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF
REFUGEES IN DISAPPROPORTION TO THE DOMESTIC POPULATION. IN
ANY CASE, SADRUDDIN POINTED OUT, THAT OF \$10 MILLION.
AVAILABLE FOR THIS PURPOSE TO UNHCR, ONLY \$3.1
MILLION HAD BEEN SPENT TO DATE. HE URGED THAT WE
DO ANYTHING POSSIBLE TO PROD THE RTG AHEAD ON THIS
MATTER. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE REVERTED TO THE
ISSUE OF A NEW APPEAL FOR FUNDS, SAYING THAT IT IS
WELL KNOWN TO THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERED THAT UNHCR
IS PRESENTLY SITTING ON A LARGE SUM OF MONEY THAT IT
IS UNABLE TO SPEND BECAUSE OF THE SLOW MOVEMENT OF THE
RTG. IT IS THEREFORE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO LAUNCH
ANOTHER APPEAL AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, HE
ADDED THAT HE NOW PLANS TO DO SO "IN THE SPRING,
MARCH OR APRIL", DIRECTED TO ALL MEMBER GOVERNMENTS,
AND NOT ONLY TO A SELECTED FEW AS IN THE PAST.

5. IN THIS REGARD, SADRUDDIN AND HIS STAFF
URGED AGAIN THAT OUR FUNDS BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR
USE IN TRANSPORTING REFUGEE FROM THAILAND TO
THIRD COUNTRIES AND IN PARTICULAR TO FRANCE, WHICH
IS AGREEABLE TO ACCEPTING BETWEEN 500 AND 600 PER
MONTH. THEY REPEATED A POINT MADE PREVIOUSLY
THAT, BY EASING THE CASELOAD IN THAILAND,
SUCH A MOVE WOULD BE IN OUR OWN LONG TERM BEST
INTERESTS.

6. WITH SOME VIGOR, SADRUDDIN COMMENTED THAT WHILE
THE RTG PROBABLY HAD ITS OWN REASONS FOR DOING SO,
HE PERSONALLY COULD NOT CONCEIVE A WORST PLACE TO
MOVE THE 12,700 MUONG THAN THE LOEI-PETCHABUN AREA,
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SECRET

PAGE 03 GENEVA 00202 131819Z

TERMING THE ACTION "PROVOCATIVE". THE DECISION TO
HAVE UNHCR COOPERATE IN THE VENTURE WAS CLEARLY
ONE TAKEN WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE. HE MADE THE
GRATITUOUS OBSERVATION THAT THIS PARTICULAR GROUP
HAD ALREADY COST THE UNITED STATES CONSIDERABLE MONEY
BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THEIR OWN COUNTRY. RIZVI,
NOTING THE CLOSE PROXIMITY OF THE RELOCATION SITE
TO THE LAO BORDER ONLY HALF FACETIOUSLY NOTED THAT

WITH THE MEKONG SHIFTING ITS BED AS IT FREQUENTLY DOES,
IT WAS NOT BEYOND THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY THAT THE
MUONG REFUGEES MIGHT ONE DAY FIND THEMSELVES
BACK IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY. GOBIIUS OBSERVED THAT
THE HEAD COST OF THE MUONG REFUGEES WOULD BE
DRIVEN CONSIDERABLY HIGHER THAN THAT FOR OTHER
REFUGEES IN THAILAND DUE TO EXPENSES INVOLVED IN
THIS MOVE. DALE

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